

SWEDEN AND NORDIC BALANCE

by

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(Editor's Note: *The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Defense or its agencies.*)

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(How can a non-aligned country contribute to the military and political balance between the great power blocs in its own region?)

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Sweden's role as a great world power ended when Karl XII was defeated at the Battle of Poltava in the Ukraine in 1709. The Baltic provinces had to be ceded to Russia, and Peter the Great moved his capital from Moscow to St. Petersburg (now Leningrad). Russia thus arose as a major power on the Baltic, envisioning then as now that the Baltic provided access to Europe and a natural outlet for the Russian Empire to the west.¹

Although relegated to the status of a third rate power, Sweden has continued to a surprising degree, to influence world events in the Twentieth Century. This influence is

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exerted largely by its national vigor, by its example of social and industrial progress, by its contributions to humanitarian causes, by its activist participation in international organizations, and by its military involvement in the peacekeeping operations of the United Nations.

Modern Sweden occupies a central position at the head of the Baltic, on NATO's northern flank. Except for the Finnish crisis of 1961, when the Soviet Union threatened to invoke the consultation provisions of the Soviet-Finnish Mutual Assistance Treaty as a counteraction to growing West German strength in the Baltic, relative quiet has generally prevailed.

The northern calm and stability stand in sharp contrast with the events of the Mediterranean area, where recurrent inflammatory events focus the attention of planners, and policy and decision makers on the threats to NATO's southern flank. The buildup of the Soviet Navy in the Mediterranean, the increasing Soviet influence in the Arab states because of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the problems of base rights in Franco Spain, and grant aid support for the military dictatorship in Greece are but a few examples of major Mediterranean problems.

Although less volatile, the Baltic and the Scandinavian peninsula are in many respects significant to western defense. There are some who contend that the buildup of the Soviet Navy and Merchant Marine in the Baltic is occurring simultaneously with a parallel expansion in the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean. These observers see the Soviet naval threat to Western Europe as naval pincers, with the southern arm through the Mediterranean and the northern arm through the Baltic.

Sweden, an armed neutral, provides a military and political balance between NATO Norway and Denmark, and non-aligned

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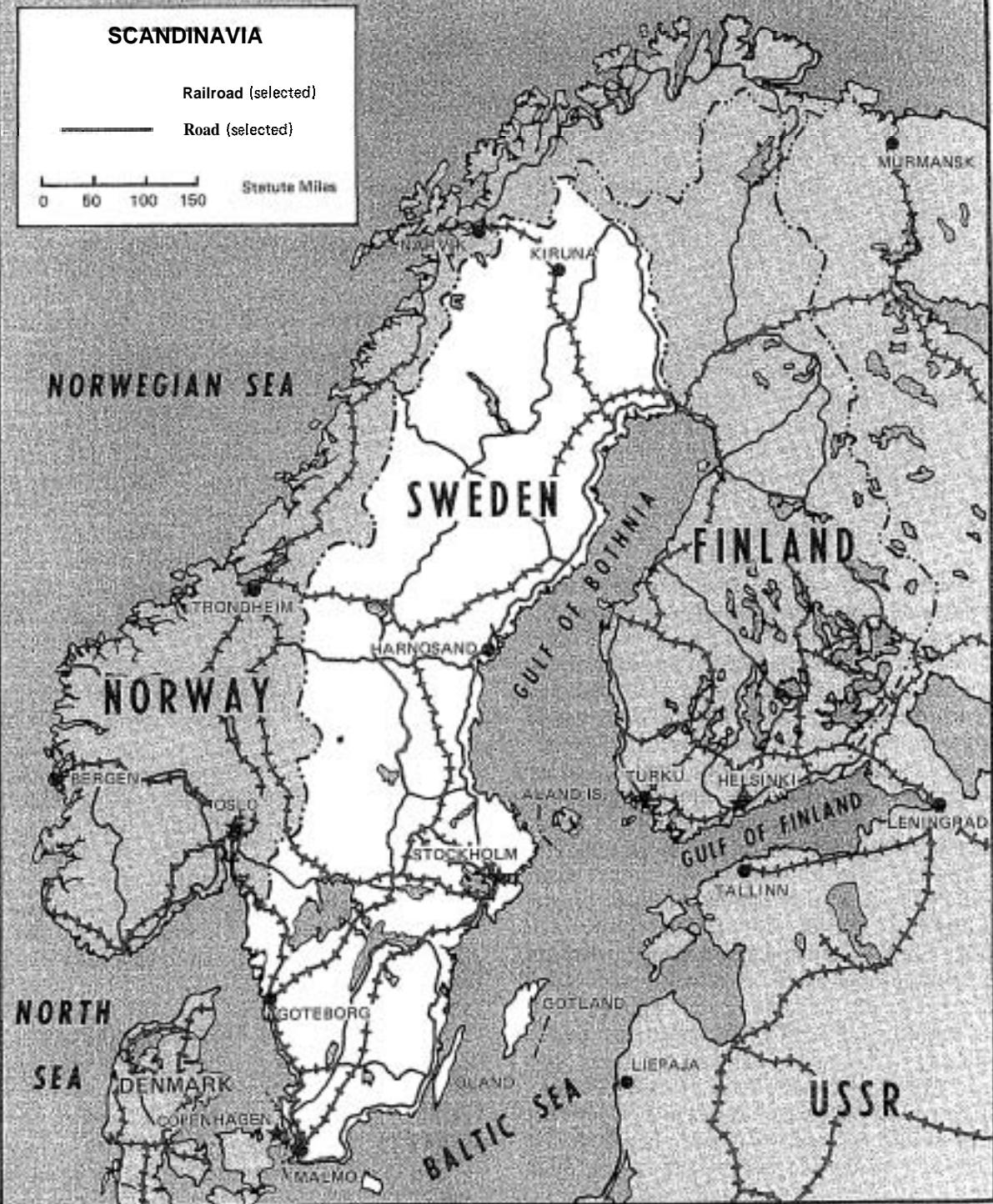
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Railroad (selected)

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Finland, which lies under close Soviet scrutiny. The Scandinavian states thwart direct Soviet access through the narrow exits of the Baltic, and they lie directly beneath the shortest air and missile route between Soviet and North American population and industrial centers.

An analysis of the Swedish Armed Forces emphasizes the degree to which Sweden contributes to the delicate balance in the Scandinavian region. The power equation of Scandinavia, generally termed Nordic Balance, minimizes the amount of resources that NATO nations must devote to the region's security. Similarly, the goals of the Soviet Union seem to favor a neutral, non-nuclear Scandinavia which does not seriously threaten Soviet access to the Atlantic through the Baltic straits.² Because Denmark and Norway are NATO countries, a non-aligned Sweden is essential to Soviet security.

GEOGRAPHY

Sweden is an oblong shaped country with the third largest area in Europe and the longest coastline (4,738 miles). If a pin were placed on a map at Sweden's southern tip, and the entire country rotated around this pivot, Sweden's northernmost part would scribe an arc below Naples, Italy.

Sweden presents an eastern front across the Baltic and, with Finland, along a northern border that is longer than NATO's entire central front in Europe.

Most of the population of almost eight million live in the southern third of the country, which is industrially and agriculturally the most prosperous portion of the land. In the south, Denmark and Sweden control the Baltic approaches which are so important to Soviet European merchant shipping and which constitute a major access route for Soviet naval forces to the Atlantic. In the north, Sweden shares a land border with Finland, and Swedish Lapland lies astride the most accessible route through Finland to the largely ice-free port of Narvik, Norway. The rail line to Narvik passes through Kiruna, the center of the extensive iron ore deposits. The Kiruna mines provide one of Sweden's most important exports.

Sweden shares a long and peaceful border with its Norwegian neighbor. Until 1905 Norway formed a federation with Sweden, and there is generally a cultural, religious, language and social similarity among Norwegians and Swedes.

ECONOMY

By and large Sweden's economy is industrialized, with full employment as one of the basic tenets of the Social Democratic Government. Popular American opinion to the contrary, private enterprise owns and operates 90 percent of Swedish industry, the State only 6 percent, mostly public utilities, and public cooperatives the remaining 4 percent.

A GNP of over \$28 billion gives Sweden one of the highest standards of living in the world, with a per capita GNP well over \$3000. The projected annual growth of GNP through the 1970's is based largely on foreign trade. West Germany and Great Britain are Sweden's two chief trading partners. About one-fourth of Sweden's industrial production is exported, primarily to EFTA³ and EEC⁴ countries, with exports to the United States averaging about 6 percent of the total. Imports follow the same pattern, with imports from the United States usually averaging about 10 percent of the total.⁵ About 5 percent of Sweden's foreign trade is with the Eastern European countries, including the Soviet Union.

Trade unions and employers' organizations are centralized in Sweden, with central wage negotiations every two years. For more than thirty years Sweden has enjoyed a remarkable industrial peace, which has contributed significantly to increasing production. The number of days lost annually due to labor disputes per 1,000 population tends to vary in Sweden between .3 and 6.6, as compared to 80 to more than 100 in the United Kingdom.⁶

The Swedish Federation of Labor (LO) has taken a statesmanlike view of labor relations. By educating its membership, LO has led the field in movements to rationalize Swedish industry. Where Swedish workers have lost jobs to mechanization, LO has urged the

government and the National Labor Market Board to encourage the establishment of other plants to offset the impact of transitional unemployment.⁷

Sweden is a member of European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and belongs also to the Nordic Council, a political forum among the Scandinavian countries. Sweden, like Great Britain, is interested in an economic association with the European Economic Community (EEC) provided that association would not involve changes in Sweden's tradition of political non-alignment. Within the framework of the Nordic Council, Sweden has explored the formation of an economic union with Denmark, Norway and Finland. However, this regional union, called "NORDEK," was vetoed by Finland in the summer of 1970.⁸ Great Britain's entrance into EEC would pressure the Swedes to accommodate themselves to the resulting economic situation. If modified membership in EEC proved impossible for the Swedes, they would probably take the initiative in trying to conclude a NORDEK type of economic community within Scandinavia.

About 16 percent of the Swedish national budget goes for defense. Sweden's defense industries are quite sizable, and although the Swedish Armed Forces are the paramount customer, arms exports make possible longer, more economic production runs. NORDEK would provide a market for arms as well as other goods.

Early in 1970, the Swedes concluded an agreement with Finland to deliver twelve J-35 Draken jet fighters for \$49 million.⁹ In many cases the Swedish requirement is so limited that the country must look to the West, primarily to Great Britain, France, and the United States as sources from which to buy military hardware.¹⁰ Alternatively, if production is started on a major weapons system, the Swedes must seek external markets for arms, just as they must export other manufactured goods to maintain a healthful economy.

With internal problems of inflation and increased taxation and a balance of payments deficit, the pressure to export arms will increase. In some cases, such as in Finland,

Swedish arms are acceptable and even preferable substitutes for Soviet systems. Finland could hardly expect Soviet approval to buy U.S. systems nor those produced in other NATO countries, whereas Swedish arms might win Soviet approval.

POLITICS AND FOREIGN POLICY

Sweden last engaged in a war in 1814. This confrontation with Denmark at the end of the Napoleonic era pitted the Swedish Crown Prince Karl Johan, alias Jean Baptiste Bernadotte, a former Marshal of France, against Napoleon's ally. Bernadotte won a decisive victory over the Danes in Holstein; and in the Treaty of Kiel in January 1814, Denmark ceded Norway to Sweden. The Norwegians finally swore allegiance to Bernadotte under military pressure and remained united with Sweden until September 1905, when The Act of Union of 1814 became void as the result of a Norwegian plebiscite.

The first Bernadotte King, Karl XIV Johan, ascended to the Swedish throne in 1818. Having served a successfully martial apprenticeship as Crown Prince, he instituted a period of peace which has lasted until the present day. Under Bernadotte's rule, Sweden's first and fundamental principle of foreign policy became, and still remains, non-alignment in peace aimed at neutrality in war. This policy is not without difficulty, and Sweden mobilized its armed forces on several occasions, including in this century during both World Wars; however, by clever diplomacy linked with adroit opportunism, the Swedes remained non-belligerent.

During World War II, Swedish policy deviated from strict neutrality. The fundamental aim was to stay out of the war at all costs.¹¹ Although sympathetic to the Finns in the Russo-Finnish conflict during the Winter War of 1939-40, Sweden would not permit a British-French force to cross its territory to come to the aid of the valiant but sorely outnumbered Finnish forces.

After the German occupation of Norway and Denmark, Sweden permitted unarmed German troops on leave to traverse its

territory enroute back and forth to Norway. Germany was also permitted to send combat troops (one combat division) from Norway across Sweden to support Finland in 1941, a blatant violation of neutrality. Later in the war, as the tide of battle turned against the Germans, the Swedes moved to cancel German transit privileges and cooperate more openly with the Allies, especially Denmark and Norway.¹²

The non-alignment foreign policy is accepted by all political parties without debate. There is also general acceptance that non-alignment requires a certain credible defense establishment. Questions concerning defense usually involve priorities and budget levels rather than fundamental changes in the national goal of maintaining credible defense forces.

The Social Democratic Party has ruled in Sweden for 38 years. The opposition bourgeois parties—the Conservative Party, Center Party, and Liberal Party--are unable to field enough popular support and able politicians to challenge seriously the predominant Social Democrats. The real political action transpires within the Social Democratic Party structure, which encompasses ultra-liberal, New Left elements as well as a conservative faction at the extreme ends of the spectrum, with all gradations of political shadings between.

On 20 September 1970, the Swedes held their first national election for the new 350 seat unicameral legislature.¹³ The Social Democrats lost votes to the Center Party and also to the Communists, who succeeded in raising their number of seats from three in the old Lower House to 17 in the new Parliament. Although the Social Democrats lost the absolute majority attained in the 1968 general election, they are with 162 seats still by far the most powerful single party, with the Center Party running a poor second with 71 seats. As during the period from 1957 to 1968, the Social Democrats should be able to retain control, even though they have nine less seats than the combined bourgeois opposition (162 versus 171). The election results are summarized below.¹⁴

<u>Party</u>	<u>Number of Seats 1968 Election (Lower House)</u>	<u>Number of Seats 1970 Election</u>
Social Democratic	125	162
Conservative	32	42
Center	39	71
Liberal	34	58
Communist	3	17
Total	233	350

It is significant to note that Olof Palme, the 44-year old Prime Minister, has managed to stay in office during this first real test of his political power. Lacking the popularity and homespun appeal of Tage Erlander, who retired in October 1969 after a 23-year term as Prime Minister, Palme believes that the government's authority has been weakened "very little" by the election outcome,¹⁵ but the fact is that without a Social Democratic majority he must at least consider the Bourgeois Party positions more fully than in the old bi-cameral parliament.

Criticism of United States foreign policy, particularly in Vietnam, appears to be a tactic employed by the Social Democrats to divert attention from pressing domestic problems such as lack of adequate urban housing and rising inflation. Although the Swedish Government recognizes both the Hanoi and Peking regimes, the general orientation of the Swedish people is culturally, historically, and actually toward the West.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

One of the great strengths of this small country is the vigor, intelligence, and aptitude of its scientific community. The government encourages travel for the country's scientists, who participate regularly in important scientific meetings and symposiums throughout the world.

In the military field, Swedish technology finds application in a surprisingly apt and ambitious military research and development program. The Swedes have a heavy water atomic energy program which militarily keeps



SWEDISH EMBASSY, WASHINGTON, D.C.

*The famous turrettless Swedish S-Tank, manufactured by Bofors, mounts a 105mm high velocity gun.
The vehicle in the background is the Pbv 302 Armored Personnel Carrier.*

the nuclear option open to them, although the political decision about developing a Swedish nuclear weapon has been deferred indefinitely.

Military research is centered in the Research Institute of Swedish National Defense (FOA). This organization has four main divisions: FOA-1 for chemistry and physics; FOA-2 for electronics and ballistic physics; FOA-3 for guidance, acoustics, and electronic countermeasures; FOA-4 for nuclear research. The Defense Materiel Administration of the Armed Forces (FMV) is the primary development agency with Army, Navy, and Air Force Departments. Cooperation among FOA and FMV is well coordinated and continuous.

Swedish industry manufactures most of the aircraft, vehicles, ships, and weapons systems in use by the Swedish armed forces. These major weapons systems include aircraft, ships, tanks, missiles, trucks, artillery, electronic and communication equipment, explosives, and small arms of all types. Bofors, SAAB, and the National Defense Factories (FFV) are

well-known exporters of arms throughout the western world.

SOCIAL FACTORS

Sweden is an advanced social welfare state which applies the principle of universality rather than need in social programs. For example, all children receive a free school lunch, not just the needy. Everyone qualifies for free medical care, not just those who cannot afford it. Almost one-third of the national budget is devoted to social services and social welfare programs. The mortality rate among infants is one of the lowest in the world and the average life expectancy is among the world's longest.

The Swedish population is almost homogeneous. More than 98 percent of the population belong to the Lutheran State Church. Minority groups of Lapps, Gypsies, and Southern Europeans (the last group imported to fill the labor market shortage) are very small and fairly dispersed. In other words, the language, religion, culture,

customs, attitudes, and values of most Swedes support a society in which there are very few dissident elements. This lack of diversity is a source of national strength. The population nears 100 percent literacy and tends to be rational, deliberate, honest, non-violent and somewhat passive.

SWEDISH DEFENSE STRATEGY

Swedish military doctrine, termed "Total Defense," includes the armed forces, civil defense, economic defense, and psychological defense. The Swedish King Gustav VI Adolf has stated, "The foremost purpose of Total Defense is to be so well prepared for war that our preparedness will deter aggression. . . . The various parts of Total Defense interact together so that the highest possible effectiveness is reached."¹⁶

Sweden's basic military strategy is to deter an attack by providing armed forces that would inflict severe losses on any aggressor. In the event of an attack, the strategy is to repel the invader from Swedish soil. The Swedes have no regional defense commitments, not even among their Scandinavian neighbors; and the national goal is to avoid war at almost any price.

During World War II when German strength was a threat to Swedish security, Sweden permitted the Nazi's to transport men and materials on the Swedish railway system. As the pendulum swung in favor of the Allies, this privilege was withdrawn.

After the war, Sweden, in one of its least glorious moments, acceded to Soviet demands for the return to Soviet control of hundreds of Baltic States refugees against their will to uncertain fates within the Soviet Union.¹⁷ The obvious historical lesson is that Sweden will accommodate to political pressure as necessary to avoid military involvement unless an aggressor actually attacks Swedish territory.

Sweden lacks the natural resources for any sort of protracted conflict and relies in fact on the US/NATO nuclear umbrella, although this reliance is neither stated nor admitted by Swedes. The Soviet Union presents the only military threat to Swedish security, and the

Swedish strategy includes keeping Finland independent from increased Soviet influence.

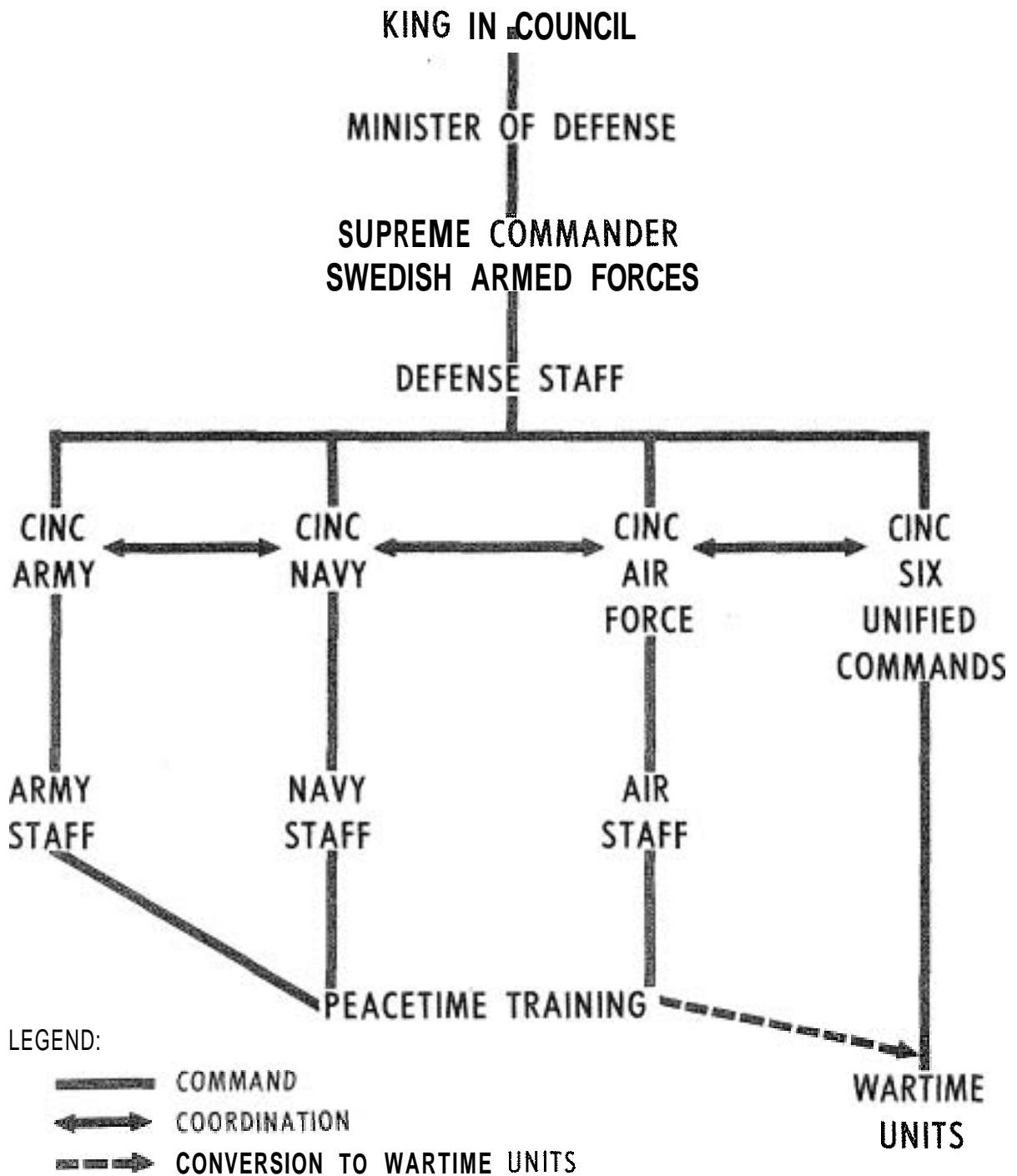
The Swedish strategic argument concerning Finland develops along the following theme. If Sweden became more closely oriented militarily with NATO, even with Denmark and Norway, the Soviet Union would have the justification necessary to invoke the Mutual Assistance Treaty by requiring closer military cooperation from the Finns. Russo-Finnish collaboration would poise Soviet forces on the Swedish border in the north, eliminating the warning time that the Swedes require for mobilization. This consideration alone makes Swedish membership in NATO a strategic as well as a political impossibility.

STRUCTURE

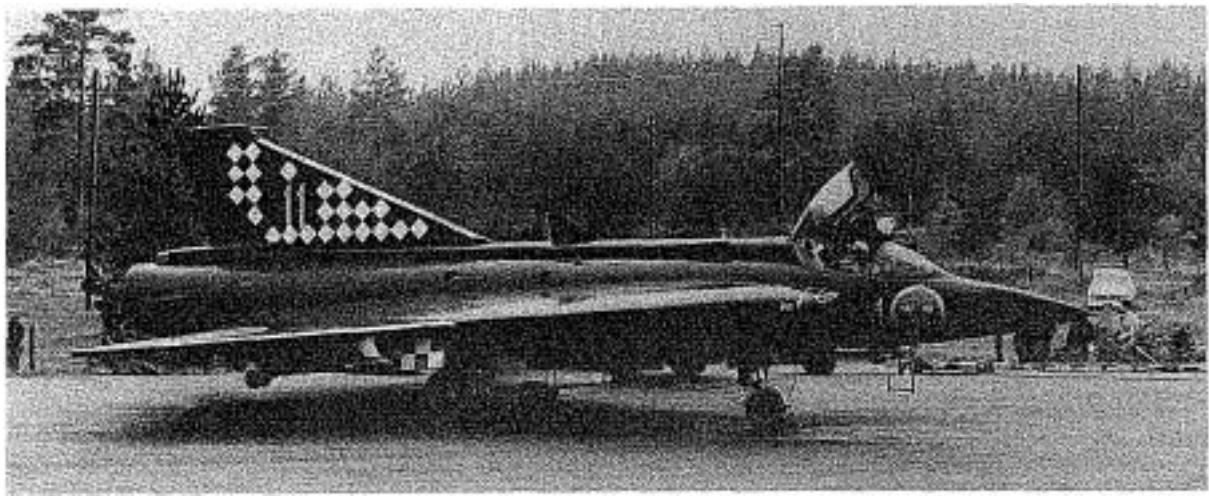
The Swedish Armed Forces consist of an Army, Navy and Air Force. Within the Navy there is also a Coast Artillery somewhat similar in mission to the American Marine Corps. The services train and equip forces for the six unified commands into which the country has been divided since 1966.

The military structure is founded on a rapid mobilization system based on universal military service for all male citizens over 18 years of age. The peacetime organization is a training establishment managed by the chiefs of service. In the wartime organization, the training centers disappear and the mobilized war units become subordinate to the unified commanders, who report through the Defense Staff to the Supreme Commander. This organization is depicted on page 61.

The six unified commands are fully staffed and operative during peacetime and are responsible both for planning in their geographic areas of responsibility and for the exercise scenarios of reserve units recalled to periodic active duty. These active duty cycles, together with the conscript's large unit training at the end of the initial training period, afford peacetime practice for the unified commands. The exercise scenarios involve actual execution of defense plans over the terrain that the mobilization unit will defend in wartime.



ORGANIZATION OF THE SWEDISH ARMED FORCES



SWEDISH EMBASSY, WASHINGTON, D.C.

The Swedish J-35 Draken, built by SAAB, is the mainstay of the Swedish Air Force.

ARMY

Some Swedish Regiments trace an unbroken history to the 1530's and the time of Gustavus Vasa, the grandfather of Gustavus II Adolphus, Sweden's most famous Soldier King. When a conscript begins his training he is assigned to a regiment. He becomes familiar with its traditions and history, and generally remains a member of the same regiment throughout his period of reserve obligation. The regimental system helps to instill esprit in the new recruit. The regiments, although rich in tradition, no longer become field units in wartime. They are peacetime training centers for infantry, armor, artillery, signal, engineer and support battalions which form the building blocks of the wartime brigades. They also serve as centers for the direction and control of mobilization of wartime brigades, which are the basic self-sustaining ground elements during war. Brigades may, however, be grouped under division-type control headquarters as the situation may require.

Of the 50,000 annual conscripts, about 36,500 go to the Army. The regular Army consists of about 11,000 officers and non-commissioned officers, whose peacetime purpose is to man the defense and army staffs and the training cadre for the regimental training centers. Although the Swedish Army's wartime organization is classified, the

analysis provided by the Institute of Strategic Studies in London leads to a wartime strength estimate of about 30 infantry brigades and 10 armor brigades with supporting logistical units. The aggregate mobilized strength of the entire Swedish Army would be about 750,000 men and women.¹⁸

AIR FORCE

The Swedish Air Force, the fifth largest and one of the most modern in the world, is composed of more than 1200 aircraft, including 720 combat aircraft, mostly of Swedish design and manufacture. The first line of Swedish defenses, the Air Force provides the umbrella under which the planned mobilization of the armed forces can be accomplished. A substantial number of Swedish planes are constantly airborne on patrol over the Baltic, and another segment is maintained on ready alert.

The Air Force also depends on mobilization, but to a lesser extent than the Army. Most of its regular active duty personnel are pilots, and the reaction time for the Swedish Air Force is quite rapid—a matter of a few minutes as opposed to a few days for the Army and Navy.

The newest Swedish aircraft, the SAAB A-37 Viggen, is a high performance Mach 2 aircraft with a STOL capability to allow it to

operate from Sweden's numerous reserve airfields which afford dispersion during war. The mainstay of the Swedish Air Force is another SAAB aircraft, the J-35 Draken, while the older S-32 provides the Swedish inventory with a jet reconnaissance capability. Propeller driven aircraft include C-130 Hercules, the older DC-3, British Pembrokes, and the Swedish built SK 50 SAAB Safir. A recent addition is the Beagle lightplane which is used for training and also as a platform for the Bofors anti-tank Bantam missile in close support of the Army. This aircraft is manufactured in England.

RESERVE

All Swedish males at age 18 become eligible for military service. The basic period of training is for about 10 months, except for those conscripts selected for specialist, non-commissioned officer, and officer training. This initial period is followed by regular periods of refresher training with the reservist's wartime unit, affording him the opportunity to draw his equipment at his mobilization point and immediately join his unit as he would in wartime.

The reserve obligation extends until age 47, when the reservist may voluntarily join the Home Guard, which provides lightly armed security forces to secure the Swedish infrastructure, such as factories, communications, and key road intersections, while main force units mobilize. The Home Guard also provides some security against surprise raiding operations against Swedish communications.

There are several thousand mobilization points throughout Sweden where equipment, weapons, and ammunition are prepositioned. Each reservist carries with him detailed mobilization orders. Total mobilization would paralyze the nation's normal economy and is not rehearsed in peacetime, so that there is no verification of the Swedish claim that 750,000 men can be mobilized within 72 hours. However, the Swedes themselves are

NAVY

The Swedish Navy is divided into two parts: the Fleet and the Coast Artillery. The Navy is primarily equipped with destroyers, motor torpedo boats, auxiliaries, mine layers, mine sweepers, and submarines, as well as an anti-submarine warfare air arm. Many of the bases for Swedish ships are underground caves hewn from the granite of the Swedish coast.

The Coast Artillery provides an amphibious defense anchored in the thousands of islands in the Baltic approaches to the Swedish mainland. Prepositioned mines and firing positions are designed to slow an aggressor's amphibious assault. The Coast Artillery operates from naval vessels, navy helicopters, and also from its own amphibious craft.



SWEDISH EMBASSY, WASHINGTON, D.C.

The destroyer, Smaland, plows the Baltic on patrol.

confident that the system will work. They point to the success of piecemeal rehearsals and also to the success of the Israeli mobilization in the June 1967 war, since the Israeli mobilization system is quite similar to the Swedish.

The reserve forces are augmented by a number of voluntary military organizations. In addition to the Home Guard, these include women's auxilaries for cooking, driving, and other services; civil defense; Red Cross; shooting clubs; and functional associations for improving professional knowledge. The long list of Swedish voluntary defense organizations serves to underline the interest of the Swedish people in Total Defense. Their total membership exceeds one million.

CONCLUSION

Sweden's geographical position between NATO Norway and Finland overshadowed by the Soviet Union provides a balance on NATO's northern flank. This balance depends on a continuation of Sweden's non-alignment policy and the maintenance of modern armed forces sufficiently strong to make defense of Sweden credible.

Since Sweden's only security threat is the

Soviet Union, it might appear to be in Sweden's interest to join the Western Alliance. However, Swedish participation in NATO could cause the Soviet Union either to occupy Finland or demand military bases within Finland. Finnish bases would extend Soviet over-the-pole offensive missile capabilities and early warning air defenses. Such bases would not only increase the threat to Sweden but also to Norway and NATO.

It is in best interests of the Western Alliance and the United States to support Sweden's role of Nordic Balance, primarily because the contribution of non-aligned Sweden to the security of the Scandinavian peninsula permits NATO a certain economy of resources in the Scandinavian region.

Although Swedish industry has an excellent capability for the manufacture of conventional weapons of a wide variety, the relatively short production runs of certain items make them uneconomical. Whenever possible, NATO countries should sell to Sweden the war material that Swedes seek to buy off-shore in order to maintain their military strength. Similarly, the Allies should maintain a liberal policy toward the sale of Swedish weapons to other non-communist nations.



SWEDISH EMBASSY, WASHINGTON, D.C.

The six recently constructed SPICA-class torpedoboats displace 200 tons and have gas turbine engines. Their armament includes one 57 mm (2.5 inches) Bofors gun and six 53 cm (21 inches) torpedo tubes.



SWEDISH EMBASSY, WASHINGTON, D.C.

The Pbv 302 Armored Personnel Carrier mounting a 20 mm cannon provides mobility to mechanized infantry.

FOOTNOTES

1. Anatole A. Mazour, *Russia, Past and Present* (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Co., Inc., 1951) p. 119.
2. Keesing's *Contemporary Archives* (Bristol: Keesing's Publications Ltd.), September 5-12, 1964, p. 20277, quoting an Oslo speech by Khrushchev, "...the surest guarantee of security for Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland is a policy of neutrality that would be recognized by both sides--the Western Powers and the Socialist Countries . . ."
3. EFTA: European Free Trade Association, Sweden is a member.
4. EEC: European Economic Community, in which Sweden is *not* a member.
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8. Stanley V. Anderson, *The Nordic Council, A Study of Scandinavian Regionalism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967).
9. *INTERAVIA*, Volume XXV No. 5/1970 (Geneva: Interavia, May 1970), p. 505.
10. *Military Assistance and Foreign Military Sales Facts* (Washington, D.C.: DOD, OASD/ISA, March 1970), p. 21 and p. 25. U.S. sales to Sweden of military hardware totalled \$37.3 million for Fiscal Years '50 through '69. This figure does not include commercial sales and the reference states that the U.S. prefers sales through U.S. commercial channels whenever practicable, that is, by U.S. industry directly to Sweden.
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